

# ESL finds conversation partners

*Spanish-speaking class joins forces with English-speaking class in Canby*

**Shadra Beesley**  
Editor-in-Chief

"It really brings together language and cultural exchange in a unique way," Kathleen Fallon, outreach instructor, said on the recent addition to the college's ESL Outreach program.

The college currently offers three ESL classes at Ackerman Jr. High in Canby on Monday and Wednesday nights. The two higher-level classes, Beginning Grammar and Intermediate Conversation, have recently experienced a change in curriculum.

ESL has joined forces with another class, Teachers on Special Assignment, which also meets at Ackerman on Wednesday nights. The class teaches educators how to speak Spanish. When the two classes discovered each other they immediately realized how each could benefit from the situation.

The two programs started arrang-

ing for the students from both classes to meet together for 20 to 30 minutes to have conversations with one another. This allows native English speakers learning Spanish to speak to a native Spanish-speaker and vice versa.

"There's just something that happens when you're speaking to a native speaker that doesn't happen anytime else," said Fallon.

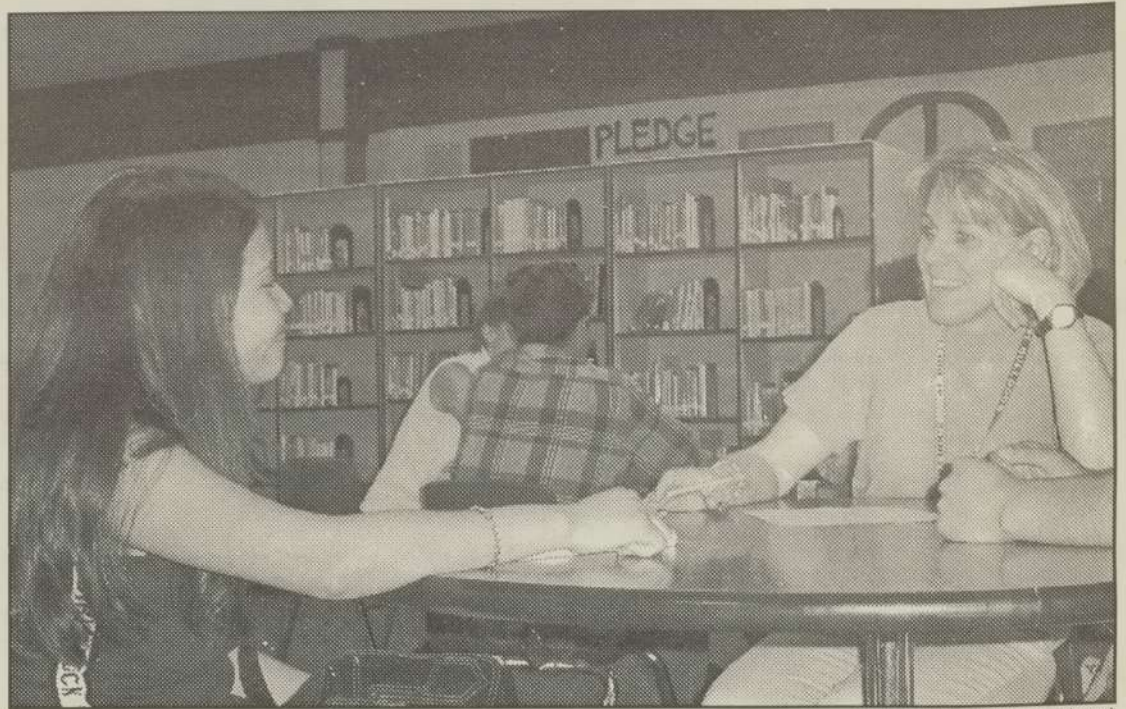
Fallon got the idea for the conversation program when she studied Spanish in Mexico. She was involved in a program that utilized conversations with native speakers as a method of learning the language.

"I learned the value of speaking with a native speaker and just having conversation time," said Fallon.

When Fallon returned from Mexico she arranged for a migrant to fund a conversation partners program at the Harmony Campus. However, "when the money ended,

**"There's just something that happens when you're speaking to a native speaker that doesn't happen anytime else."**

**Kathleen Fallon**  
Instructor  
ESL Outreach



KATHLEEN FALLON Contributed

*A student learning English in Clackamas' ESL Outreach program meets with an educator learning Spanish in the Teachers on Special Assignment program.*

the program ended," said Fallon. She has been trying to find a way to instate another similar program ever since.

"We had been brainstorming and trying to figure out how we could get a conversation partners program out here," said Fallon. "It was so serendipitous that they just happened to be meeting at the same

time."

Other outreach instructors Betsy Kraft and Trista Johnston, as well as Teachers on Special Assignment instructors Joe and Elaine Morelock, agree that the conversation partners concept has been a very successful addition to the program.

"Everyone loves it," said Fallon.

"(The Morelocks) love the concept of having our students talk to each other."

The ESL Outreach program plans to continue this program next fall. The Teachers on Special Assignment class is planning to make their schedule coincide with the ESL classes "so we can repeat a successful program," said Fallon.

# Author shares Arabian culture

**Karen Hill**  
The Clackamas Print

"[Diana Abu-Jaber] is writing to the world," said an audience member at this year's Author's Night.

The event, held last Wednesday in the Gregory Forum, featured Portland Arab-American author Diana Abu-Jaber.

The evening was designed to allow the audience to share in the enjoyment of Arab-American influenced fiction. Afterward, Abu-Jaber answered questions about her writing and her experiences as an Arab-American. It was an opportunity for the author to provide a small bit of clarity and comprehension of the Arabian culture and traditions.

Abu-Jaber began the event by reading a 30-minute portion of her latest novel "Crescent" to her audience, which consisted of around 30 listeners ranging from young teenager to senior.

"My realtor picked this section out," said Abu-Jaber as she opened the novel, "because there is romance and food." A delightfully entertaining and curiously intriguing reading ensued.

The story depicted the slightly awkward, anxiously excited interactions between two characters—an enchanting Iraqi man, Han, and an American chef, Serene—who were romantically interested in one another.

During the story character Han talked of his Iraqi home. "Iraq is endless," said Han. Listening to the dialogue between the characters gave a great amount of insight into a world

many have never experienced.

"It's more than just buildings," said Han, attempting to explain his native land to Serene. "It's like I can sense the ghosts from all the people and empires that used to be there."

After the reading, a curious audience, anxious to hear more about Abu-Jaber, made comments and asked questions. Abu-Jaber explained that she "wrote mostly from memory. I remember the sense you were at the center of everything; a cultural entity."

Although most of the book takes place in America, there are bits and pieces of Arabian culture interspersed within.

"You know it's there," said Abu-Jaber, "but you just get a taste of it."

Abu-Jaber, daughter to an American mother and Arabian father, admits that although she was born in America, there are many issues her family must face.

"There is a certain anxiety that comes up about how Arabs are represented on the media," Abu-Jaber said.

She hopes her books, "Arabian Jazz," "Crescent" and her third, still in the making, will provide an accurate depiction of Arabs and their lifestyle. "Arabian Jazz," she adds, is more comedic and slightly autobiographical, while her third novel is more of a multi-cultural family story and, she said with a smile, "a father's food obsession."

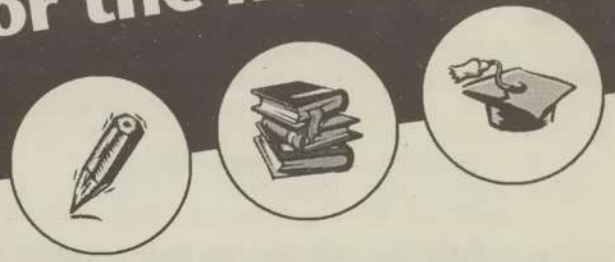
An audience member commented, "[Crescent] exposes the human side of the Arabian culture," he said, "and it's beautifully written."

**"You know (Arabian culture) is there, but you just get a taste of it."**

**Diana Abu-Jaber**  
Author



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